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ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE SECOND PART OF ITS THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION

Draft report

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Addendum

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS

1. At its and meetings, on 6 and 7 September 1994, the Committee considered the report of the Secretary-General containing the proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 1996-1997 (A/49/310).

Discussion

2. In introducing the proposed budget outline, the representatives of the Secretariat stressed that the outline was not a preliminary programme budget but only a preliminary estimate of resources to accommodate the proposed programme of activities during the biennium and therefore was general in nature, establishing broad resource projections developed at a high level of aggregation. The detailed review of programmes and establishment of requirements would be carried out when the proposed programme budget was developed.

3. A number of delegations welcomed the outline as proposed by the Secretary-General. They warmly supported the steps taken by the Secretariat to propose significant savings, as a result, in particular, of the termination of a number of obsolete activities; they also welcomed the intention of the Secretariat to conduct a review to ascertain efficiency gains and cost-effective measures that could be implemented without a negative impact on the fulfilment of mandates.

4. Some delegations regretted the decrease in the level of resources proposed for international cooperation for development and, in that context, expressed the view that such a decrease did not reflect the priority attached by the General Assembly in resolution 45/253 to the economic development of developing countries, the economic recovery of Africa, the environment and international drug control.

5. Some delegations expressed concern about the additional requirements proposed for the reinforcement of the current infrastructure for backstopping peace-keeping operations under the regular budget and pointed out that no decision had been taken by the General Assembly on that question.

6. Some delegations, while recognizing the importance of internal oversight, expressed the view that the proposed strengthening of the internal oversight functions of the Organization should not be a priority and, in that context, questioned the extraordinary increase in the level of resources proposed for internal oversight; they also expressed the view that the proposed strengthening of the internal oversight functions should not be at the expense of other activities, particularly in the economic and social sectors.

7. Other delegations warmly supported the proposal of the Secretary-General to strengthen the internal oversight mechanism and expressed the view that the strengthening was aimed at better control and evaluation of all programmes and would benefit the implementation of all the priorities.

8. A number of delegations emphasized that the concept of zero growth had not been endorsed by the General Assembly and that the rate of growth and the preliminary estimate were purely indicative. A number of delegations emphasized that the concept of zero real growth was not a prerequisite for the preparation of a proposed budget outline. Several delegations stressed that the application of zero growth should not be at the expense of priority development projects in Africa.

9. Some delegations stressed that currency fluctuations and inflation should be absorbed to the maximum extent possible. Other delegations expressed the view that the procedure currently followed for the recosting of currency fluctuations and inflation should be maintained.

10. A number of delegations welcomed the Secretary-General's intention to achieve further efficiency gains and noted that he thought economies in the order of $15 million to be realistic. A number of delegations also stressed that the search for economies should not be at the expense of priority development projects in Africa.

11. A number of delegations, while expressing the need for further improving the efficiency of the Organization, indicated their concern about the negative growth contained in the outline and, in that context, indicated the need to implement all the mandates approved by Member States.

12. A number of delegations noted the proposed priorities given to political affairs, international and regional cooperation for development and human rights and humanitarian affairs, which took into account the priorities identified in

the medium-term plan and noted by the General Assembly in its resolution 45/253 of 23 December 1990, as well as general trends of a broad sectoral nature as required by General Assembly resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986.

13. A number of delegations expressed the view that priorities should be consistent with the priorities established in the medium-term plan, as noted by the General Assembly in its resolution 45/253. Other delegations expressed the view that priorities should also reflect legislative intent since the adoption of that resolution. Some delegations urged that, as a fundamental part of the budgetary process, a rigorous search should be made for obsolete activities and activities of marginal utility.

14. One delegation expressed the view that the expenses of the International Seabed Authority should be treated within the outline and not outside as proposed by the Secretary-General.

15. One delegation expressed the view that, according to paragraph 2 of document A/49/310, budgetary provisions for the implementation of results of the Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States should be included in the outline and regretted the omission of such proposals.

Conclusions and recommendations

16. The Committee examined the outline, using as a framework the four aspects listed in paragraph 1 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/49/310), namely:

(a) The preliminary estimate of resources to accommodate the proposed programme of activities during the biennium;

(b) Priorities, reflecting trends of a broad sectoral nature;

(c) Real growth, positive or negative, compared with the previous budget;

(d) Size of the Contingency Fund expressed as a percentage of the overall level of resources.

Preliminary estimate of resources

17. The Committee noted the estimate proposed by the Secretary-General in paragraph 4 of his report.

18. The Committee recommended, in accordance with its mandate, that the General Assembly should consider the preliminary estimate of resources submitted by the Secretary-General as a basis for its decision, taking into account the following:

(a) The estimate should be adequate to permit the implementation of all mandated activities;

(b) The preliminary estimate was of a general indicative nature and the breakdown by major programmes was illustrative;

(c) Although the preliminary estimates did not contain provision for inflation or for anticipated effects resulting from currency fluctuations in 1996-1997, consideration should be given to paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 47/213;

(d) The preliminary estimate proposed by the Secretary-General had been prepared on a minimum-requirements basis and included provisions for which there was no legislative mandate yet and the financing for new mandates to be legislated by the General Assembly would be dealt with in conformity with paragraph 9 of annex I to General Assembly resolution 41/213;

(e) The intention of the Secretary-General was to conduct a review to achieve further efficiency gains;

(f) The projected implications of General Assembly decisions contained in the outline would be reviewed and adjusted on the basis of actual decisions taken by the General Assembly.

Growth

19. The Committee noted that, compared with the projected revised estimate for the biennium 1994-1995, growth for the preliminary estimate was anticipated at minus 3.2 per cent. The Committee recognized that that percentage might change in the light of the provisions contained in paragraph 18 above.

Contingency Fund

20. The Committee endorsed the size of the Contingency Fund, expressed as the percentage proposed by the Secretary-General and recommend that the working of the Fund be kept under review.